

Colleagues and Friends,

I am Bawyer Binton, an academic, a Lawyer, and a proud man of the Cumberland Plateau. As we are all aware, the future of slavery in our country is becoming uncertain. While Lincoln has expressed in his debates with Senator Douglas that he does not wish to see slavery spread, he has also made clear his intent to stand with the constitution. Still, many are skeptical of this as northern anti-slavery sentiments are growing.

Some are hasty to suggest secession, but this would be foolish. As Kentuckians we are directly between the north and the south, conflicts would undoubtedly occur on our soil, in our homes. What, then, might our future be? The north no longer relies significantly on agriculture. Instead, their attention has turned towards industry, and their economy has been flourishing. Conversely, each year, our economy here in the south worsens.

Take Virginia – in 1791 exports from Virginia amounted to an impressive \$3,130,865. Years later however, in 1852 Virginian exports amounted to only \$2,724,657. Yet when we look towards the north, there is no such decline. New York, in 1791, had exports amounting to around \$2.5M. Less than Virginia the same year by around \$600,000. Moving forward in time, in 1852 the exports of New York amounted to approximately \$87,485,000, a sum more than \$84M greater than those of Virginia the same year.

Exports are of course not everything. Instead, we may compare the values of these states. In 1850, the value of all personal property including slaves in Virginia amounted to \$391.6M, and in North Carolina this number was \$226.8M. In Massachusetts the value of all personal property, excluding any slaves, amounted to \$573.2M. In New York, this amounted to an enormous sum over \$1Billion. These numbers are clear – free states are outperforming slave states economically by a dramatic margin. While we in the south use agriculture to support our economy, we must import products from the north for that which cannot be grown. This fact boosts the economy of the north – while simultaneously allowing our own economy to decline.

What is clear here is that slavery is not proving beneficial to our own economy. Along with its uncertain future in our country, it seems a change may be needed for the good of all Kentuckians. Do not misunderstand, I do not believe abolition would be good for our people, however legislature like the Manumission act are attempting to force the preservation of this institution – though it seems to be a system failing our people. The popularity of slavery in our state is declining, especially among the common people. While wealthier Kentuckians can afford slaves, this is not the case for most.

The common people who cannot afford slaves are faced with little option but to live in poverty or turn elsewhere for opportunity. Slavery is driving away our people and strangling our economy. As a man of Kentucky, I have no wish for our citizens to live in poverty, nor to leave our state out of desperation. We mustn't make rash attempts to preserve an institution causing harm to our own people, but instead allow it to fall into obscurity through gradual emancipation. The only way the people of Kentucky will be able to prosper is through a reduction in our reliance on the institution threatening our economy.

Thank you.